

Message Text

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ACTION EB-11

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: ETRN, FR

SUBJECT: CIVAIR: FRENCH-ORIGIN ITC'S

REF: A. STATE 019029, B. PARIS 2266

LONDON FOR MEADOWS

SUMMARY: PANAM HEADQUARTERS HAS RAPPED KNUCKLES OF LOCAL REP RE SHORT-DURATION ITC'S. BACKGROUND SUGGESTS THAT INTEREST THIS SUBJECT SPRINGS FROM FRENCH RATHER TTHAN PANAM AND THAT ABRAHAM WAS LESS THAN FORTHRIGHT THIS POINT DURING CHARTER TALKS. EMBASSY HOPES DEPT. CAN HELP SMOOTH PANAMS RUFFLED FEATHERS. END SUMMARY

1. PANAM REP RAUSCHENPLAT IS UPSET AT TELEX HE HAS RECEIVED FROM PANAM HEADQUARTERS CRITICAL OF ALLEGED APPROACH MADE TO GOF ON HIS OWN RE SHORT-DURATION ITCS AS CLAIMED BY FRENCH DEL IN LAST WEEKS CHARTER TALKS.

2. WHEN APPRISED BY EMBASSY OF HOW ABOVE QUESTION HAD BEEN RAISED BY ABRAHAM DURING CHARTER TALKS, RAUSCHENPLAT DENIED FLATLY HAVING EVER APPROACHED

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FRENCH THIS SUBJECT. HE SAID THAT, ON CONTRARY, IT

WAS ABRAHAM HIMSELF WHO HAD TOSSED OUT IDEA OF SHORT-DURATION ITC'S AND INVITED COMMENTS AT MEETING HE CONVENED SEVERAL WEEKS AGO WITH TOUR ORGANIZERS AND CARRIERS. PANAM WAS REPRESENTED AT MEETING BY COMMERCIAL DIRECTOR OF PARIS OFFICE WHO, HE ASSURED RAUSCHENPLAT, HAD TAKEN GREAT CARE TO STRESS INABILITY COMMUNICATE ANY OFFICIAL PANAM POSITION THIS SUBJECT. SUBSEQUENTLY, AIR FRANCE HAD SOLICITED PANAM VIEWS DIRECTLY ON POSSIBLE INTRODUCTION OF SHORT-DURATION ITC'S BECAUSE OF CONCERN OVER IMPACT OF THEN ANNOUNCED GOF INTENTION TERMINATE FRENCH-ORIGIN AFFINITY FLIGHTS EFFECTIVE DEC. 31, 1973. IN ORDER NOT LOSE MARKET AIR FRANCE ADVOCATED FRIDAY MONDAY ITC'S TO US ON GROUNDS THIS WOULD RESPOND TO DEMAND OF IMPORTANT SEGMENT OF FRENCH MARKET AND WEEKEND PROGRAMMING WOULD AVOID DIVERSION OF BUSINESS TRAVELERS AWAY FROM SCHEDULED SERVICES. RAUSCHENPLAT SAID HE TRIED TO DISSUADE AIR FRANCE FROM FILING LIBERALIZED ITC PROGRAM AND INSTEAD TO ORIENT THEM TOWARD PRESSING SGAC TO RELAX BAN ON FRENCH-ORIGIN AFFINITIES.

3. IN LIGHT OF THIS BACKGROUND WE SOUGHT TO CLARIFY SITUATION WITH ABRAHAM WHEN CONVEYING TO HIM REFTEL (A) RESPONSE. ABRAHAM SAID THAT IN RAISING MATTER WITH US DEL HE HAD BEEN REFERRING TO SHORT-DURATION AFFINITIES (SIC) AS WELL AS ITC'S. WHEN WE ASKED FOR MORE PARTICULARS ON ALLEGED PANAM INTEREST IN MATTER WHICH WE SINCE UNDERSTOOD AIR FRANCE HAD BEEN INFORMALLY EXPLORING, ABRAHAM WAS VAGUE AND UNFORTHCOMING. HE SHOWED NO INTEREST IN DELVING INTO BACKGROUND OR PURSUING DISCUSSION FURTHER.

4. COMMENT: WE HAVE NO REASON TO DOUBT RAUSCHENPLAT'S ACCOUNT. WELL BEFORE US-FRENCH TALKS HE HAD TOLD US OF PANAM'S SUCCESS LATE IN YEAR WITH SHORT-DURATION AFFINITY FLIGHTS TO US FOR WHICH THERE HAD BEEN GOOD DEMAND. HE HAD NEVER SPOKEN TO US OF INTEREST IN SHORT-DURATION ITC'S NOR DO WE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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RECALL HIS ALLUDING TO THIS IN HIS INFORMAL MEETING LAST WEEK WITH US DEL. RCAA'S RECOLLECTION WAS THAT ABRAHAM'S REMARKS TO US DEL WERE CONFINED SOLELY TO SHORT-DURATION ITC'S AND NO MENTION WHATEVER WAS MADE OF AFFINITIES, FOR MENTION OF AFFINITIES IN THAT CONTEXT WOULD DOUBTLESS HAVE FLAGGED US DEL INTEREST ON SEVERAL COUNTS AT THAT STAGE OF TALKS. WE SUSPECT, THERE-

FORE, THAT ABRAHAM WAS BEING A BIT LOOSE WITH
HIS FACTS THEN AND NOW, HAVING PRETENDED PANAM INTEREST
PERHAPS IN HOPE OF SMOKING OUT MORE FORTHRIGHT
EXPRESSION OF US DEL VIEWS OR PERHAPS TAKING THIS
DEVIOUS MEANS TO SERVE OR APPEAR TO SERVE INTERESTS
OF AIR FRANCE OBSERVERS PRESENT.
MOREOVER, RECALLING ABRAHAMS EMPHASIS ON
THAT OCCASION THAT HE WAS "INFORMALLY" ASKING
US DEL VIEWS, THERE WAS AMPLE OPPORTUNITY DURING
US DEL VISIT TO SOUND THEM OUT MORE INFORMALLY
THAN ACROSS THE NEGOTIATING TABLE, WHICH REINFORCES
SUSPICION OF WHY ABRAHAM COSE THAT FORUM.

5. RAUSCHENPLAT IS TELEXING HIS OWN DENIAL
TO HEADQUARTERS BUT WOULD BE APPRECIATIVE OF
ANYTHING EMBASSY CAN DO TO HELP SMOOTH THINGS
OVER. DEPT. IS REQUESTD DO WHAT IT CAN IN THIS
REGARD WITH PANAM HEADQUARTERS, SINCE WE ARE CON-
VINCED IN LIGHT OF RAUSCHENPLATS EXPLANATION AND
ABRAHAMS EQUIVOCATION THAT FORMER WAS BALMELESS
IN THIS MATTER. STONE

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